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A PROPOSED GUIDE TO THE ETYMOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF LATIN WORDS

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It is universally claimed that one of the foremost educational values of Latin is its contribution of a stock of word ideas that function in the ready comprehension and accurate use of the majority of thought-words in English. Psychologists have proved, however, by experiment that the amount of transfer of training in any activity to a related activity depends in a measure upon the extent to which the teacher perceived the relation and strove in the training to make the pupil perceive it.

Both these positions were verified in experiments conducted by the writer in the University of Wisconsin in 1915-16. University Freshmen with four years of Latin were considerably better than those with two years, and twice as good as those with no Latin, in defining both familiar and unfamiliar words of Latin origin. But high-school Juniors and Seniors, with one year of Latin, taught with specific and primary attention to word formation, were slightly better in the same tests than university Freshmen with four years of high-school Latin of the traditional type. The conclusions are: (1) high-school Latin contributes materially to knowledge of English words; (2) the contribution is materially increased, and more economically secured, if the teacher keeps in mind and emphasizes the Latin methods of word formation and the Latin words and word elements (prefixes and suffixes) which have most enriched English.

The chief obstacle to this, as evidenced by tests and by inquiries received from Latin teachers, is that the teacher, even though well trained in Latin, often does not know what Latin words to emphasize. The present emphasis is largely determined by such works as that of Lodge, in which the criterion of importance of a

word is its frequency of occurrence in the authors and texts read in high school. On this principle, *proelium*, which has no common English derivative, and which consequently ceases to function as a word in the pupil's thinking if he does not go beyond Caesar, receives the same emphasis as *cedo*, which functions in dozens of English words. Hence we need a convenient index to the etymological importance of Latin root-words and suffixes.

There are several works which purport to give such an index but their defects are: (1) they have not been made scientifically, by an inductive study of all English words occurring in the actual reading of persons in and beyond the high school; (2) they do not usually indicate the relative frequency of each Latin prefix, root-word, or suffix in such reading; (3) they do not give systematic clues to the filiation of such words or to the lines of development of their meaning.

The writer proposes that organized classicism (preferably the Classical League) initiate a commission to undertake the compilation of such a work and ventures to suggest the following lines along which the enterprise should proceed.

1. The enterprise should not be a piece of classical propaganda, but a joint undertaking of scholars in three fields: (a) Educational psychology, as provided with scientific methods of selecting source material which will adequately represent the actual reading of persons in and beyond high school; (b) English, as profoundly interested in the contribution of the study to the teaching of word formation in the vernacular; and (c) the classics, as being in position to shape directly the use of the work in the teaching of Latin. Possibly Romance scholars should be included.

2. The work should be undertaken by a commission rather than by a single scholar, because of the immense labor involved in the collation and sifting of data.

3. Various phases of the work could profitably be made the task of reports in graduate seminars: the selection of source-reading material, in departments of education; the collation of English words and their classification as to language origin, in departments of English; their reference to Latin originals, in departments of Latin; while the final editing of the results, in an

arrangement comparable to that of Lodge's *Vocabulary of High School Latin*, should be left to the single person or small committee selected as editor or editors-in-chief.

4. In selecting the sources nothing should be overlooked that actually functions: magazines, including advertisements; newspapers, including sporting pages; textbooks and literary classics only if actually functional in the spontaneous intellectual life of persons who are the product of the high school. (In the tentative work done by the author upon the scheme, two copies of each of ten widely different periodicals were chosen: one copy prior to 1914, the other subsequent. This selection was empirically made and would need to be either revised or discarded entirely.)

5. In collating English words, distribution in the sources and frequency of occurrence should be recorded up to a certain assumed 100 per cent point. (In tentative collation the writer has considered five occurrences in a given issue of one source periodical as constituting maximum familiarity. Later recurrences in that issue were not counted. If this held good through the twenty issues, the resulting one hundred occurrences was taken as constituting maximum familiarity. A frequency of only three, for example, in one issue, with five in each of the others, would give a familiarity index of ninety-eight for the English word.)

6. In indicating the relative importance of the Latin root-words an index should be devised for (a) the number of English derivatives; (b) their ascertained degree of familiarity.

7. There should be similar but separate treatments for prepositional prefixes, suffixes (naturalized and non-naturalized), Greek words, and words from non-classical languages (such as *bourgeois*) coming through Latin or affected by it, with cross-references for nominal and juxtaposed compounds.

8. In the completed work, the Latin root-words should be arranged alphabetically, with their fundamental meaning and the indexes of etymological importance. Under each the filiation of its English daughter-words should be classified: (a) from the simple word, as "datum, date, dative," under *do*; and (b) from compounds, as "add," under *ad-do*; "render," under *red-do*; etc. "Addend, addition, additional" would be filiated (in shortened

form) under “add”; or, obvious derivatives (as “additional”) could be taken for granted.

The writer believes that such a work, if adequately prepared and put into the hands of teachers of Latin, Greek, English, Romance, and education, would not only contribute to a much more effective distribution of emphasis on the part of teachers, particularly of Latin, but would tend to break down the present unfortunate mutual isolation of aims and point of view, especially as between Latin and education, and would contribute much toward bringing the values of Latin home to the public in the new high-school education to which present conditions clearly point.